

[Chicago was the scene of strikes in 1886 to win the eight hour day, which led to the framing and execution of the Haymarket martyrs in 1887. In 1889 the Second International issued a call for the first of May 1890 to be made a day of protest by workers. In this leaflet, Parisian anarchists consider if this might be the spark for the revolution.]

BLANQUI *Anarchy is Humanity's Future*

### Comrades from the workshops

It is a century now since we bent our backs under the master's rod – the bourgeoisie – a century since we allowed ourselves to be led uncomplaining and unprotesting, like an ox to the slaughterhouse.

Is this going to carry on forever? No!

The hatred contained for such a long time within our hearts is beginning to spill over.

On every side we hear the cry of the suffering proletarian, heralding the great Revolution that is in the making. Plainly, and we all know this, like a trail of gunpowder, the idea of revolt is spreading everywhere.

Now all it needs is a spark to trigger the event that is to free us all of our exploiters.

Who or what is going to strike that spark? That, we do not know.

This coming May 1<sup>st</sup>, the Toilers of the entire world will take to the streets: to do what? Why will they do so? To demand what? A palliative that is not going to be able to bring about any improvement in our lot.

But no matter, for it is not for anarchists to commit nor to prevent anybody from taking to the streets.

*And who knows? If those who walk out of work that day realize what they are doing and what they want to do, it may very well be the beginnings of the Revolution.*

Whether it be May 1<sup>st</sup> or in 10 years' time when the hygienic effort of bourgeois disinfection begins; when that day comes, let us remember the suffering endured; let us feel the hunger pangs again let us see ourselves momentarily as we what we are, slaves, the executioners' hounds, made powerful by our weakness; and without pity or wrath, but cold and implacable, let us lash out as we must, until the sun of Equality finally cuts through the dense blanket of clouds screening it from our eyes.

### And you Mothers and Families

You who very often find yourselves obliged to go

without the food you need, to dry the tears of your children, remember who you are and stand up to our common enemies too.

Tell yourselves this; that since the land produces three more than it takes to feed everyone – and the bourgeois admit as much – you want your children's lives guaranteed; you want them to have, before they are born, some plot of ground in which to rest.

Refuse to raise any more paupers and afflicted fated to be murdered little by little by hunger and wretchedness, assuming that artillery and deprivation have not made a pulp of your sons and rottenness of your daughters.

### Comrades, fellow convicts

Even should it come, and if, on May 1<sup>st</sup>, the blood flows in Paris, let us sally forth from our wretched hovels and if, at last, the rifles spit death and should the corpses stack up in Paris, Fire! Fire everywhere!

Once outside of the foul places that serve as our houses and where disease exercises its latent rule, we must never go back there again. Must a man stay where he grows sickly, where vermin teem, where our lungs are assailed by lack of air and unhealthy air at that, where it is impossible to raise our offspring?

(To say that there are still folk who would preserve these hovels, on the pretext that they are our handwork). **Away, scum!**

It is our turn to bask in our properties.

And who is the owner: the ones who create them or those who watch as they are being built.?

But, comrades, if the Revolution is to have any effect, it must be triumphant. So let us be wary of those who pose as saviours and those who urge us to take to the streets; they are always the same people.

Insofar as we can we must revolt in the shadows.

We are not going to be able to strike at the heart of the beast that consumes us unless we use guile to entrap it.

One stick of dynamite surreptitiously placed is going to make more impact than 100 men who march to their deaths against a squadron.

Wherever there are property deeds, wherever the bourgeoisie has set up its headquarters, we must bring the torch. Churches, town halls, police stations must be blown up or put to the torch, but, as far as possible, the hand that does the avenging deed has to remain unknown. Only then can we start over and make an

effective revolution with a few people.

If we must sacrifice our lives, let us steel ourselves to that, but at the very least we must sell our lives dearly.

Unfortunately, even now, there seems to be an attachment to this existence which is merely one long martyrdom and there are so many into whom the thought of death strike fear.

Let us act with courage and sangfroid, comrades; is it not better to die at one fell stroke than to killed slowly the way we are?

You fear agony, but what is our life but one drawn-out agony, often more terrifying and ghastly than the throes that herald death.

Remember the Chicago martyrs who sang of the Revolution even with the ropes around their necks.

Remember Reinsdorf; remember the likes of Gallo, Cyvoct, Duval, Pini and the rest, good anarchists who did not stall until you were ready before they attacked our masters in an effort to lighten the burden rather than unwittingly drag you along.

Yes, remember, and come the day of the Revolution, death to all exploitation and exploiters, to all that represents ... authority. Do not forget that their victims number in the millions. They are merely a few thousand.

**Long live the Revolution!**

**Long live Anarchy!**

**Down with Authority!**

Above all, let us not put our trust in politicians, universal suffrage can see the day.\*

The *Jeunesse libertaire* meets every Saturday – Open access, no admission charge

\* presumably meaning something like ‘is on the rise’.

Thanks to Paul Sharkey for translating this.

### **Note on names**

August Reinsdorf was executed in 1885 for attempting to assassinate the Kaiser. Charles Gallo attacked the Paris stock exchange in 1886 and would die in New Caledonia in 1923. Antoine Cyvoct, sent to New Caledonia for an 1882 bombing he denied being involved with, would eventually be liberated in 1898. Clement Duval, anarchist expropriator, would escape from French Guyana in 1901. Vittorio Pini, anarchist expropriator, died in French Guyana in 1903.

From: <https://www.archivesautonomies.org/spip.php?article2760>

Scan of original:

<http://archivesautonomies.org/IMG/pdf/anarchismes/avant-1914/brochures/le-premier-mai-jeunesse-libertaire-1890.pdf> ■

Feedback welcome on this issue.

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## **The Sons of Night by Antoine Gimenez and the Giménologues [Book review]**

This is your chance to meet Antoine Gimenez who, by anybody’s standards, led an interesting life. In Italy, back around 1922 (when he was still Bruno Salvadori), he defended a classmate from bullying fascists. ‘It wasn’t chivalry or political beliefs – I was about twelve years old – but was quite simply that the girl was a student in the same class as us. [...] When I came to [...] I had been rescued from the Blackshirts’ clutches by some anarchists.’ [p551] So young Bruno became a subversive and set off down the path which would lead him into exile in France and later Spain.

Antoine doesn’t set himself up as any sort of revolutionary superhero: ‘In 1936 I was what is conventionally referred to nowadays as a “marginal”: someone living on the edge of society and of the penal code. I thought of myself as an anarchist. Actually, I was only a rebel. My militant activity was restricted to smuggling certain pamphlets printed in France and Belgium over the border without ever trying to find out how a new society could be built.’ [p1] The Giménologues (who are bringing you his story) call him ‘a bit of a hobo’ [p1] and his troubles with the French police were more about trying to survive than politics, like the time he was arrested with some boiler suits and had to claim ‘that he had been given them by an unknown person to sell.’ [p554]

Antoine was working in the fields in Catalonia when the Spanish revolution erupted in July 1936. The early part of *Sons of Night* shares his experiences of the revolution in Lérida, after which he joined the famous Durruti Column. Alongside the story of the anarchist militia’s push towards Zaragoza, we’re shown the change of life in the countryside that the revolution made possible. When the Durruti Column arrived in Pina de Ebro shoes were dished out from the shop to children who’d previously had home-made tyre sandals. He doesn’t ignore the anticlerical violence of the revolution, nor its complexity: ‘I realized that day just the extent of the tolerance of these uneducated men; they stood ready to kill every priest on earth with a laugh and at the same time, in order to please some old man or elderly woman, were ready to help them hide a crucifix or blessed virgin.’ [p46]

### **Looking back**

Antoine, having survived everything that the twentieth century could throw at him, drafted his memoirs between 1974 and 1976, when he was in his mid-sixties. It feels like the book of an older person. I don’t mean to suggest there’s any disillusionment.

His epilogue ends with a clear statement of anarchist belief: 'I see the earth, my home, I see humankind, my family, slowly being entrapped by the profit motive, by the sordid interests of the few on the march toward death and utter destruction, and as my thoughts turn to you, my friends, who perished fighting for an ideal of absolute equality and total freedom, I say to myself that you had it right: only a libertarian society can save humankind and the world.' [p198] But inevitably, telling of the deaths of many of his comrades gives parts of the book a real sorrow.

But it's not all sorrow! Antoine doesn't hold back in celebrating the women that he loved, something that made the book unpublishable in the 1970s, at least to certain 'old-fashioned prudes' in the Giménologues' words. [p2] Antoine is an eyewitness who doesn't feel the need to pass over in silence how the revolution challenged the old ways in personal relations as well as economics.

### **A salute to the comrades**

Antoine recounts what he experienced, but there's little egotism, rather a concern to remember all his comrades. This is not just about accuracy: he credits them with helping him to grow from a rebel into an anarchist. In his own words, before the revolution 'My sole concern was living and tearing down the established structure. It was in Pina de Ebro and seeing the collective organized there and by listening to talks given by certain comrades, by chipping into my friends' discussions, that my consciousness, hibernating since my departure from Italy, was reawakened.' [p1] In particular, he credits his friend Mario: 'like a wood-cutter, he had removed the clutter from my mind and patiently cleared away all the thorns that were smothering the craving for freedom, which drive the young and spurred us into revolt, albeit often blind and unconscious revolt, against social injustice.' [p162, note 1] So, to tell his own story Antoine has to tell us all about his comrades from the Durruti Column and the people of Pina de Ebro. And that's the task that the Giménologues take up in the second part of the book, 'In search of the Sons of Night'.

### **Kindred spirits**

I've been hearing about *Sons of Night* for so many years that this book and the people behind it have a legendary status. I was told the Giménologues were dedicated, but there was always the question: would it ever be finished? They want to know everything! You get a sense of excitement and discovery hearing about every eyewitness who contacts them or every comrade they identify in the archives. It's a pleasure to read anarchist history written by people who feel like they're kindred spirits. Their work reminds me of Paul Avrich, gently correcting the inevitable slips of chronology or spelling you get in a memoir, but

letting the protagonists speak for themselves. That mixture of burning curiosity, respect and need to get it right leads to the best sort of history.

### **History from below**

In the 1980s the Spanish revolution was an important inspiration and reference point to British anarchists (as in other times and places). Much anarchist history was hidden by the 'success' of Leninism but the Spanish revolution showed anarchists opposing capitalism, fascism and Stalinism. In a world shaped by the second world war, it gave a radical view of anarchy in action.[note 2] There's always a danger that history can be 'an escape from our time and from our world' in the words of Antoine's comrade Louis Mercier Vega.[note 3] But *Sons of Night* is a book for those who want to think critically about the Spanish revolution.

This is a great work of history from below, full of untold stories and unheard voices. There's Hans 'Jack' Vesper who dragged himself back through no-man's land and ended up in such a state that he thought he was a bear.[p519-20, note 4] Other parts remind you that in history, not much is simple. Listen to the leading CNT members lecturing the IWA in 1937: 'we displayed an extraordinary intuition and a mental agility that left other antifascists astounded' [p188]; or Antoine talking about how Hermann Gierth survived the Stalinist repression: 'For a German Trotskyite, the [International] Brigades were a safe haven as long as he held his tongue and accepted the discipline.' [p169, note 5]

I'm not used to books that tell you how to read them. At the start you're advised to read Antoine's account straight through, and then read it again with the end notes from part two. It works, but you may need another go round. Bring two bookmarks, some blank paper and an open mind. Listen to the sons and daughters of the night. As the Giménologues say 'the history of the social war in Spain will never be over until we have done with the world that made it a possibility, and a necessity.' [p9]

### **Notes**

- 1, Mario might be Mario Bellini, see page 631.
- 2, For just one example, see 'The Spanish Revolution: In Their Words' *Northampton Libertarian*, 1987; reprinted in *KSL: Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library* No. 53, February 2008 <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/cfxqf6>
- 3, in 'Rejecting the Legend', *Témoins* 1956; Reprinted in *KSL: Bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library* No. 91-92, October 2017 <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/573p98>
- 4, information from accounts by from Helmut Kirschey and Nils Lätt. A German seaman, Vesper lost a leg, but his life was saved by being 'adopted' as Swedish by the Swedish seamen's union.
- 5, Gierth survived the Stalinist secret police, the

French ‘democratic’ internment camps, Dachau and Auschwitz.

The sons of night : being Book I: Memories of the war in Spain (July 1936-February 1939) by Antoine Gimenez ; plus Book II: In search of the sons of night by The Giménologues, foreword by Dolores Marin Silvestre, translated by Paul Sharkey. AK Press and Kate Sharpley Library, 2019. ISBN 9781849353083. 732 pages.

<https://www.akpress.org/sons-of-night.html> The Giménologues’ website (in French) is at <http://gimenologues.org/> ■

## Factionalism & Individualism

[This letter is part of the discussion following the ‘Statement by the Black Flag Group to the Liverpool Conference of the Anarchist Federation of Britain, Sept., 1968’, reprinted in our last issue <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/5x6bpx>]

It is a pity Peter Neville descends to meaningless abuse (“is the AFB a twinkle in my eye” etc) which can only put people off the discussion. It IS confusing to “newcomers” and he adds to, and perhaps participates in, the confusion.

He regards it as perfectly proper that he, or others, should raise the factional banner of “Individualism” to distinguish themselves from others who are presumably faceless, mob anarchists. However, he pours out invective on anyone who wants to raise another factional banner, say “Revolutionary” – as if they were the only revolutionaries, forsooth! The “Black Flag” Group (formerly to the Liverpool Conference, calling themselves “Cuddonites” as a joke against the “Stirnerites”) “introduced factionalism” – but the “Minus One” Group merely asserted its individuality.[1] (Declension: “I assert individuality”; “You introduce factionalism”; “They are schismatics”). The manifesto of that Black Flag group was described by Donald Room (Conscious Egoist from way back) as “exceptional in its courtesy” – he suggested “Meliorist” instead of the suggested “Liberal” and “Revolutionary”; in the final draft, someone suggested “Revolutionary” and “Libertarian” it not being suggested that one was not the other, but solely to distinguish, just as “Individualist” does.

### Individualism.

For despite Neville, ALL anarchists are individualists. The reason most anarchists who know the movement only since “Minus One” began reject the word “individualism” is because “Minus One” has made it a factional slogan. (This, despite Neville, is perfectly proper. There is no reason why it should not do so. Sid Parker has always behaved in the most

honourable manner towards the movement – e.g. he would not attend meetings called to discuss action knowing he was in advance opposed to action; to the best of my knowledge he has never since forming “Minus One” called himself a member of the AFB because he is opposed to any such action as it might undertake).

Prior to 1940, most anarchists used the words individualism, communism, socialism, syndicalism as denoting phases of anarchism, or different aspects of anarchism, but not – in this country – did they denote factional trends. Most accepted the view – reiterated by Christie and myself in “Floodgates”[2] – that inasmuch as anarchism is one extreme of individualism at the other end of which is Capitalist Individualism, so it is also another extreme of socialism, at the other end of which is Marxist Communism. It is extreme individualism and extreme socialism.

After 1940, Eddie Shaw, of Glasgow, introduced into the AFB the idea of “Conscious Egoism” as working-class revolutionary syndicalism. He made a great impression in Glasgow (at one time the Glasgow AF commanded audiences of two or three thousand). What he was doing was, of course, rephrasing syndicalist clichés in terms of Stirner (unofficial strike committees are “unions of egoists” and so on). He had a striking command of working class oratory and his theories sounded new and original. He and Jimmy Raeside made a strong influence on the British anarchist movement. (Many of those calling themselves “individualists” in the 1960 census in Freedom meant just this).

Of those to be influenced in the English movement, I think one can fairly include Donald Room and Tony Gibson though both I think later parted company with his class struggle ideas. Both however, and others like them, believed in anarchism as revolutionary – Tony Gibson’s articles on the money system, prisons, intelligence &c. in “Freedom” are quite specifically revolutionary anarchist. Nobody thought of the conscious egoist then as in any way a faction. Only when Sid Parker began “Minus One” – with using the word “individualism” to denote what I suppose would be nearer the individualism of Armand in France or the American “Individualists” – Tucker etc. – was it thought of here as something apart and separate. But even then, this did not cause any confusion since Sid Parker always honourably made his position quite clear.

Confusion and “anti-individualism” really began when the Lamb & Flag meetings in London[3] became well attended and provided a Sunday night entertainment. Along came a new bunch – who happened to take the name Individualist from Minus One but were in fact Elitists. They affected languid philosophical manners and wearily deplored action, the working class etc. They turned from that to

sustained interruptions, and posed a problem: If anarchists believe in freedom, at what point do you stop people breaking up meetings with persistent interruptions? (added to the fact that if you throw someone out of licensed premises, or allow them to continue making a scene, the landlord will close you down for ‘disorderly conduct’).

“These are not Individualists,” protested Tony Gibson. “They are just ill-mannered cunts”. Nor had their “individualism” anything in common with what had hitherto been known as such. What were the questions that “could not be answered” – as P. Neville smugly asserts? They were all variations on one theme: the expression of normal Conservative clichés but stating that these were anarchistic. Anarchism is already as revolutionary as one can go without expressing it in action and they deplored action so they sought to be outré and shocking by such opinions as – “I am an anarchist but I am opposed to negroes”; “The money system is anarchistic and guarantees freedom”; “Goldwater/Poujade etc are anarchistic”; “I need a government, as an anarchist, for the safeguarding of my freedom”; “anarchism means libertarian prison warders” etc. (I could put names in brackets but this seems to be regarded as unkind!)

One can answer such questions as normal Tory questions. To be expected to answer them as “expressions of a school of anarchism” is to place oneself in a ridiculous position. Take away your anarchistic audience, however, and what do these people try to out-outré each other with? Not the same conservatism – almost immediately one of them becomes “un ami de Bonnot” to shock his fellow-“individualists”. [4]

All this is what we have shaken ourselves away from. But now P. Neville has his new position as an “individualist”-elitist. He, however, is a child of the Peace Movement. Intellectually superior as he is, he must have his “conferences” and meet “informally” for democratic discussions. He wants it to be part and parcel of a “conference”-making machinery. Thus he introduces attacks on various people, strives to analyse attitudes while maintaining the platitudes of loftiness.

### Debating Society

Well, let him do so. But is the anarchist movement a revolutionary organisation, or is it a debating society? If the latter, he has his place, though one feels the arguments are dishonest. But why does he object so strongly to there being TWO organisations – one a debating society, in which all points of view can go on talking until Doomsday, and the other striving to be a revolutionary organisation? Perhaps it will succeed, perhaps it won’t – but why must there be only the one to be burdened with the perennial discussion of the point “if anarchism means freedom why can’t I call myself an anarchist and oppose

anarchism?” which is what some of it amounts to. (In a recent pamphlet, published “for the anarchist federation”, someone actually says he is and always has been in favour of government but does not consider this means he should not call himself an anarchist.)

A. Meltzer.

P.S. I do not suggest Neville supports all or any of the views expressed by the other Elitists. Neither do they! They have in common a desire to ‘shock’ and an ability to bore – even by debating society standards.

### Notes

1, *Minus One* (“Individualist Anarchist Review”) see <https://www.unionofegoists.com/journals/minus-one-1963/>

2, *Floodgates of Anarchy* (Albert Meltzer and Stuart Christie) was published in February 1970.

3, the disruption was discussed in *Freedom* 12/11/66, 19/11/66, 26/11/66

4, Photo of the first meeting of “Les Amis de Jules Bonnot” is at <http://www.sidparker.com/photos/> ■

## Anarchist history roundup July 2019 part 1

### Correction

Stuart Christie sent in this correction to the review of *A beautiful idea: history of the Freedom Press anarchists* by Rob Ray (page 6 of KSL97-98): ‘John Rety may well have read out Miguel’s speech: [when freed] he lost his voice for around 6 or 7 months (possibly psychological).’ [SC]

### Jānis Žāklis (Peter the Painter)

*A Towering Flame: The Life & Times of the Elusive Latvian Anarchist Peter the Painter* by Philip Ruff is available now:

<https://www.breviarystuff.org.uk/philip-ruff-a-towering-flame/>

You can watch a video of the book launch at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yU6KP9nm6qE>

One point Ruff makes is that had the police in London retracted the wanted notice for ‘Piatkow’ the whole legend of ‘Peter the Painter’ might never have got going. But what happened in London was only a small part of his life: see chapter four, ‘Dare to be a Daniel’ for the 1906 raid on Riga’s secret police HQ!

One of our readers said of the first English-language edition [2018] ‘What a marvellous piece of research. It really must have been a labour of love.’ *A towering flame* is also reviewed at:

<https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/6t1h62>

### Reviewed: Wobblies of the World

The latest issue of *Counterfutures* (Left research, thought, and alternatives) contains a review of

*Wobblies of the World: A Global History of the IWW* (edited by Peter Cole, David Struthers & Kenyon Zimmer) by Barry Pateman. This is a bit broader than a simple review: you get a quick intro to the strengths and weaknesses of the previous books on the Industrial Workers of the World, as well as enlightening asides like ‘For some, the IWW existed as a mythical entity just as much as a real one’.

The book itself sounds good but let me quote this bit from the end of the review: ‘IWW members spoke a similar language to the people they worked with and supported. It was a language based on undergoing similar emotional and physical experiences that generated empathy with others. It might be that organisations such as the IWW are impossible to replicate today, but they are important to learn about if only for their abilities to speak *with* people and not *at* them. This is something that, the Left today, for whatever reasons, appears to have difficulty replicating. However we want to define its ideology this quality might be the IWW’s finest and most potent legacy.’

You can read the review at <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/jdfpmk>

More info at <https://counterfutures.nz/>

### Barry Pateman on Emma Goldman

‘I lived closely with her memory and work for thirteen years, helping to put out three volumes of her letters and writings. As I grow older it pains me to see how she has been treated by anarchists and historians alike. Many of them have filleted her ideas to find those they find prescient and relevant today ignoring anything that doesn’t fit their own particular predetermined ideas or needs. Such an approach demeans the wonderful complexity of her ideas and the way she saw them inter-relating. So often people ignore how anarchist communism was the dominant and underlying philosophy of her life; the platform that all her struggles were built on. She never gave up fighting against the economic and mental cruelties engendered by capitalism and state communism no matter the emotional and physical cost to herself. Perhaps we all need to take a deep breath, step back and realize that it is her life, not ours. The least we can do is agree that she lived her life on her terms and accept this remarkable woman for who she was and not for who we would like her to be.’

<https://www.anarchistagency.com/commentary/on-emma-goldmans-150th-birthday/#barryp>

### From other archives

Read ‘The Freedom Press Anarchists and H.M. Forces’ and other secret files from the National Archives (highlights of file HO 45/25554) at <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/bk3knf>

Part two of the roundup (sorry) is at <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/12jnb5> ■

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## Brenda Christie (1949-2019): a tribute

Brenda Christie died at home in June after a short battle with cancer. At the KSL we have always tried to commemorate the less famous comrades who made up the anarchist movement. Intensely private, she appeared only as ‘Marigold’ (the typesetter) in the Cienfuegos Press titles she helped publish. Later, the academic authors ensured she was thanked by name when she worked as an editorial assistant at Cambridge University Press.

Brenda worked with the First of May Group against Franco’s dictatorship. She also thought of the name for and played a central role in the Stoke Newington Eight Defence Group. Stuart Christie in his eulogy says Brenda ‘played a crucial and pivotal role in helping to organise and coordinate my ultimately successful defence... working late into the night typing up the barristers’ notes during the eight-month Old Bailey trial, one of the longest in British legal history. Her character and integrity won her the grudging respect of the senior police officers involved in the case.’ John Barker, one of those convicted, later thanked her for her work with the defence group saying that she had saved him several years of prison time.

Anarchists can have complex lives: Brenda loved Shakespeare and ran a drama school. In the eulogy, Stuart tells how she turned her back on the ‘dolce vita’ of sixties Milan because it ‘failed to satisfy her sense of moral integrity.’ Instead, she lived a life full and committed. Our thoughts go out to Stuart, Branwen, Merri and Mo and all who knew and worked with her.

[You can read Stuart’s Eulogy at <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/9kd6dm>]

Image: Stuart and Brenda Christie, Paris, 1974: photo by Antonio Téllez (who also cooked the delicious rabbit à la Basque). With thanks to Stuart Christie. <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/djhc94> ■

# The Russian anarchist movement in North America

## by Lazar Lipotkin [review]

Born Eliezer Solomonovich Lazarev in Odessa in 1891, Lipotkin joined the anarchist movement at the time of the 1905 revolution. He was one of the leaders of a general strike of Odessa junior high school students (and was arrested for it). In 1910 he emigrated to the United States where he would spend the rest of his life. As Archibald states in the introduction, he was active in the Russian-American anarchist movement ‘for almost 50 years and played a leading role in most of the major events of its history.’ [p.viii] So he had the experience and motivation to produce its history.

Lipotkin comes across as self-effacing: he often mentions ‘Lazarev’ coming to lecture somewhere, without stressing this is the author himself. Interviewed by Paul Avrich, Victor Lynn called Lipotkin ‘nice, friendly’ [1] and this comes through: he narrates the internal disagreements of the anarchist movement without sounding bitter. Archibald records that ‘Lipotkin tried to present his often contentious material in an even-handed way’ [p.ix].

Lipotkin was an anarcho-communist (and later a supporter of the Organizational Platform) and opponent of anarcho-syndicalism.[2] This book throws much useful light on Russian-American anarchist organizations like the Union of Russian Workers (or, more properly the Federation of Unions of Russian Workers of the United States and Canada). Archibald’s introduction makes an essential point about terminology: ‘Most of the anarchist organisations were called “Unions” (although “Associations” is a more accurate translation) and their members “Unionists.” [...] it should be emphasized that these unions were community, not workplace, organizations, even if most of the members were workers.’ [p.ix] [3]

Lipotkin provides an extremely valuable account of the activities of the Russian anarchist movement in America, which was affected but not destroyed by repression in both America and Russia. ‘They created organizations, schools, libraries, cooperatives, federations, and special groups of agitators and propagandists; they published journals, newspapers, books, brochures, and other literature with anarchist content; they helped the anarchist movement in Russia, as well as the anarchist movement in America, etc. In short, the Russian-American anarchist movement deserves to have its story told.’ [p.1]

Lipotkin tells (from personal experience?) of N. Mukhin lecturing in Rochester, New York, in 1916. ‘He described in vivid detail the wretched, full-of-

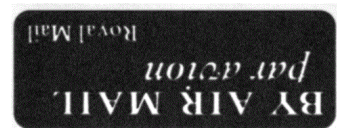
suffering lives of the workers and the rich, luxurious lives of the capitalist parasites. [...] Working people must not beg, but rather demand, and conquer by revolutionary means, all the wealth of which they are creators. [...] In his remaining lectures Mukhin maintained the same perspective, i.e. the necessity of revolutionary struggle by working people against all the evils and calamities surrounding them: against war and capitalism, against the state and church – for a better and free communist life.’ [238]

I was interested to see the importance of libraries. One of the very earliest groups (Newark, New Jersey, 1908) had relied on ‘the works of Tolstoy, Gorky, Herzen, Bakunin and Kropotkin, borrowed from the Russian section of the municipal library.’ [p.225] The comrades in Rochester made their own library and bought a special bookcase for it [p.233]. This and other anarchist libraries, along with all the efforts put into education, show a movement reaching out to the people around it. There’s good stuff here for people in North America who want to dig into local anarchist history. It’s not without surprises (did you know that Russian anarchists in North America reprinted Tom Paine’s *Age of reason?* [p.204]) Shining light onto a movement all-but-forgotten, Lipotkin’s book is worth reading for anyone with an interest in anarchist history and practice.

### Notes

- 1, *Anarchist voices* p368
- 2, Anarcho-communism aims at a society where ‘People will work according to their capabilities, and receive according to their needs.’ (*Svobodnoye obshchestvo* [*The free society*], Canada 1920 quoted on p.250) so no connection to Leninist parties. It’s also used to identify the anarchist current who don’t follow the anarcho-syndicalist emphasis on revolutionary unions to reach and organise the free society.
- 3, For more on the Union of Russian Workers, see Mark Grueter’s thesis ‘Anarchism and the Working Class: The Union of Russian Workers in the North American Labor Movement, 1910s’ <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/18580>; for an anarcho-syndicalist viewpoint see Maxim Raevsky *Anarcho-Syndicalism and the IWW* also just published by Black Cat Press, a fascinating reprint of a serialised essay from *Golos Truda*, 1917. See also the biography of Lipotkin by Nick Heath <http://libcom.org/history/lipotkin-lazar-1891-1959-real-name-eliezer-lazarev>

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